

## Hundreds participate North Central Regina smudge walk

REGINA — Hundreds of people showed up in North Central to help smudge the neighbourhood.

The File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC) hosted the third annual smudge walk and residents from Regina and surrounding First Nations communities responded, as droves of people filled the streets of North Central.

FHQTC Tribal Chairman Edmund Bellegarde said it's important for First Nations to connect with urban band members and that the smudge helps create that connection. He was impressed that so many young people participated in this year's event.

"It's inspiring that we're starting to move in the right direction in terms of getting away from some of the lifestyle choices that some of our young people get snagged into and some of them are negative lifestyles," said Bellegarde. "We want to help bridge that and provide some positive opportunities."

The walk has come to symbolize different things to different people.

Chief Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier from the Okanese First Nation has participated in all three events because she believes it's culturally relevant.

"It instills our values back into the people that live in this area or in Regina and it reconnects the culture," said Day Walker-Pelletier. "I think it's important that this continues."

She believes more First Nations leaders should participate but was pleased with the chiefs and councillors who did attend.

Chasity Delorme, from the Cowessess First Nation urban office, brought approximately 30 walkers with her because she thought it was a worthwhile cause.

"This is our second year participating in the smudge walk because a lot of our First Nations members live in this core area," she explained. "We want to ensure that not only our members but First Nations people in general are shown support and (show) that as a First Nation we stand behind them in any culture and community events."

Several groups of school children also attended the event.

Savannah Bunnie, 13, from Kitchener Community School was given the honour of carrying this year's smudge. The first two walks a male youth was chosen to hold the smudge. This year and next, a young female will be given the honour of leading the walk.

Bunnie said leading the walkers was "awesome" but at times she felt a bit shy to be front and centre. She said as she walked she prayed for the health and well-being of her family.

Mayor Pat Fiacco said the walk represents a time for the Regina community to come together for something positive.

"It's a time for people to reflect on the good things and even give some thought in regards to some of the negative," said Fiacco.

He said the turn out for the day's event shows that the community really wants to work together.

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Source: The Regina Leader-Post